

THE VALLEY OF LILIES

evening at such an hour of the night ?' And she answered me :

* Surely, for you were writing, and you were writing about such a matter.' All of which was so. And she added : ' Son, I always watch and pray for you, my children, and for others, until in your convent the bell rings for matins, and shows me what you are doing ; nay, if you had good eyes, you would see me with you—as clearly as I see all and each of you, who you are, where you are, and what you are doing. Very often our sweet Saviour bears me company, while I say the Psalms and walk up and down this little cell, and He talks with me, instructing me about many things. But when He sees me wearied, He sits over there, and at His bidding I sit at His feet, and we talk together up to that hour. But when that hour comes, He gives me leave to sleep, saying : Go, daughter, and rest, whilst thy brethren, who are now rising to matins, praise Me in thy stead. And so I sleep. Then, after a brief while of slumber, I straightway rise.' ¹

At first, Bartolommeo was not edified by her calling herself *misera*, *miserabile*, more wretched than all men, the cause of all the evils that were done. He thought she did not really mean what she said ; until, to his question how this could be, as she manifestly abhorred the sins that many delighted daily to commit, she answered as she did later on to Fra Raimondo : " O father, I see you do not know my wretched state. For I, miserable woman, have received so many and such wondrous gifts from my Creator, that, as I think, there is no reprobate so vile that, if he had received such, would not be all aflame and burn with the love of his Creator. And, both by the example of his life and by the words of his teaching, he would so enkindle the hearts of men to the love of our celestial country and to the contempt of the present life, that they would cease from their sins. Since therefore I, wretched woman, endowed with so many gifts, do not do this, what can I in very truth say about myself, but that I am most ungrateful to my God, and that I am the cause of the ruin of all, who through me could be called back from evil and incited to good ? If I did my duty, I should call them back by the food ¹ *Contestatio cit.*, coll. 1320, 1321.